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LIQUID EJECTION APPARATUS

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

Field of the Invention

5 This invention relates to a liquid ejection apparatus and, more particularly, it relates to a liquid ejection apparatus of the type adapted to generate negative pressure in the liquid ejection head by means of the difference of water head
10 difference between the liquid ejection head and the liquid bag containing liquid to be supplied to the liquid ejection head.

Related Background Art

 Liquid ejection apparatuses (ink-jet printers)
15 are designed to record images on a recording medium by ejecting liquid such as ink from a liquid ejection means (liquid ejection head) onto the recording medium. and Such apparatuses provide a number of advantages including that the liquid ejection means
20 can be easily down-sized, that the apparatus can record high definition images on plain paper without any particular treatment at low running cost, that they are of ~~no-impact~~ the no-impact type and hence emit little noise, and that they can record color
25 images by using inks of different colors without difficulty.

The liquid ejection means (liquid ejection head) of the liquid ejection apparatus of the ~~above-identified~~above-identified type is designed to eject liquid from a liquid ejection port by utilizing film boiling that is produced in the liquid such as ink by means of thermal energy generated by an electrothermal transducer or a ~~heat-emitting~~heat-emitting element. The liquid ejection means (liquid ejection head) of the type that is adapted to eject liquid by utilizing thermal energy as described above can be manufactured by forming its components including the electrothermal transducer, the electrodes, the walls of the liquid flow path and the ceiling plate on a substrate, utilizing a semiconductor manufacturing process that typically involves techniques such as etching, evaporation and sputtering. The manufacturing process ~~allows~~makes it possible to densely arrange liquid flow paths and liquid ejection ports without difficulty in order to provide a down-sized liquid ejection means. It is also possible to produce an oblong and/or flat (two-dimensional) liquid ejection means (liquid ejection head) by exploiting the advantages of IC technologies and micro-processing technologies. Then, a liquid ejection apparatus can be equipped with a ~~multiple~~plurality of liquid ejection means that are mounted densely in the liquid ejection apparatus.

FIG. 6 of the accompanying drawings schematically illustrates a known liquid ejection apparatus of the type under consideration. Referring to FIG. 6, a plurality of (four in FIG. 6) liquid ejection heads (liquid ejection means) 201 are mounted on a carriage 210. The liquid ejection heads 201 are provided respectively with electrothermal transducers (not shown) for generating thermal energy, liquid flow paths through which liquid is supplied, and liquid ejection ports (not shown), and are adapted to eject liquid through the liquid ejection ports, utilizing the pressure change generated by growth and contraction of bubbles due to film boiling of liquid produced by the thermal energy that is generated by the electrothermal transducers. The carriage 210 is reciprocatingly guided by a guide shaft 211 and a guide plate 212. It is driven to reciprocate by a carriage motor 213 by way of a timing belt mechanism 214. An image (including characters and/or signs) is recorded on a recording medium 215, which may typically be a sheet of recording paper, by driving the liquid ejection heads 201 according to ~~the~~ recording information applied to them in synchronism with the reciprocating movement of the carriage 210.

As a recording session is completed for a single line, the recording medium 215 is moved

forward by a distance corresponding to ~~a~~the line by
feed rollers (not shown) and delivery rollers 216.
Then, the next recording session starts for the next
line, moving the carriage 210 relative to the
5 recording medium 215 that is now lying still. In
this way, the image recording operation proceeds
until all of the intended image is recorded on the
recording medium 215, alternately repeating the
intermittent forward movement of the recording medium
10 and the recording session. In FIG. 6, reference
symbol 202 denotes cartridges communicating ~~to~~with
the respective liquid ejection heads 201 by way of
tubes 203 and operating as supply source of liquid
such as ink for the liquid ejection heads 201. The
15 cartridges are removably fitted to the main body of
the liquid ejection apparatus. In FIG. 6, reference
symbol 217 denotes spurs that cooperate with the
delivery rollers 216 to forwardly move the recording
medium 215.

20 Liquid ejection recovery system 220 is provided
at a position located within the limits of movement
of the liquid ejection heads 201 but outside the
recording area of the heads, in order to avoid
defective liquid ejection (including non-ejection)
25 and maintain the normal function of liquid ejection
of the liquid ejection heads 201. The liquid
ejection recovery system 220 comprises caps 221 for

hermetically sealing (capping) the corresponding liquid ejection ports of the liquid ejection heads 201 and a suction pump (not shown in FIG. 6), which is connected to the inside of the caps 221. The
5 suction pump is driven to operate while the liquid ejection heads 201 are capped so as to apply negative pressure to the liquid ejection ports and draw ~~the~~
out of the ejection ports foreign objects, ~~there~~
~~including the~~ such as thickened liquid, air bubbles
10 and dust, with liquid. The ~~drawn~~ foreign objects
that are thus drawn out are then driven out through tubes 222.

As pointed out above, ~~the~~ a liquid flow ~~paths~~
path of the known liquid ejection apparatus comprises
15 liquid ejection heads, liquid cartridges and a liquid ejection recovery system that are typically arranged in a manner as shown in FIG. 2. Referring now to FIG. 2, the liquid cartridge 102 (which corresponds to
liquid cartridge 202 in FIG. 6) comprises a liquid
20 bag 103, a housing 104 containing the liquid bag 103, a rubber peg 105 forming a supply port for leading
~~out liquid from~~ out of the liquid bag 103, a rubber
peg holder 106 and a detector plate 107 for detecting the amount of the remaining liquid. The rubber peg
25 holder 106 is made of resin and adapted to hold the rubber peg 105. It has an end whose outer periphery is held in tight contact with the inner surface of

the liquid bag 103. The rubber peg holder 106 has a flange 108 that is rigidly fitted to the housing 104. The liquid bag 103 has two oppositely disposed sides whose areas ~~is~~ are the largest among all the sides of the bag. ~~and one~~ One of these two sides, ~~that~~ which faces downward, is securely fitted to a side of the housing 104 by means of an adhesive or bonding agent, while the other side, ~~that~~ which faces upward, holds the detector plate 107, ~~that~~ which is rigidly fitted to a part ~~thereof~~ of that side of the bag.

The apparatus main body comprises a ~~cartridge~~ cartridge-containing section 109 for containing a liquid cartridge 102. A hollow needle 110 is arranged at the ~~cartridge-containing~~ cartridge-containing section 109 and communicates ~~to~~ with the liquid ejection head 101 by way of a supply tube 111 so that, as ~~a~~ the liquid cartridge 102 is put into the ~~cartridge-containing~~ cartridge-containing section 109, the hollow needle 110 is driven to go through the rubber peg 105 of the liquid bag 103. Then, liquid can be supplied from the liquid bag 103 to the liquid ejection head 101.

In the instance of FIG. 6, four liquid cartridges 202 are provided for the four liquid ejection heads 201. When recording color images, typically cyan, magenta, yellow and black inks are contained respectively in the four liquid cartridges

202 for the four liquid ejection heads 201 so that
the liquid ejection heads 201 can record ~~images,~~
images using these color inks. As seen from FIG. 2,
a plastic liquid bag 103 is put in each of the liquid
5 cartridges (202 in FIG. 6 and 102 in FIG. 2) and ink
is supplied from the liquid bag 103 to the
corresponding liquid ejection head 101 by way of the
supply tube 111.

As liquid is supplied from the liquid bag 103
10 in the liquid cartridge 102 and ejected from the
liquid ejection head 101 that communicates ~~to~~ with
the liquid bag 103 by way of the supply tube 111, the
internal pressure of the liquid ejection head 101
falls. Then, more liquid is supplied ~~further~~ from
15 the liquid bag 103 to the liquid ejection head 101 by
way of the supply tube 111 to compensate for the
reduced internal pressure.

A volume-of-remaining-liquid detecting means
112 is provided in the ~~cartridge-containing-~~
20 cartridge-containing section 109 in order to detect
the amount of liquid in the liquid bag 103. The
volume-of-remaining-liquid detecting means 112
typically comprises a detection lever 113 arranged in
the ~~cartridge-containing-cartridge-containing~~ section
25 109 and pivoted by a shaft 114 and a photo
interrupter 115. The detection lever 113 is urged
counterclockwise by a spring (not shown) and has an

end that is held in contact with a detection plate 107 rigidly secured to the upper surface of the liquid bag 103. Thus, as the liquid in the liquid bag 103 is gradually consumed to lower the detection
5 plate 107 as indicated by broken lines in FIG. 2, the detection lever 113 turns counterclockwise. Then, the other end of the lever interrupts the light beam of the photo interrupter 115 so that a signal is generated to notify the user that the liquid in the
10 liquid cartridge 102 is almost gone and to prompt him or her to replace it.

As pointed out earlier, the liquid ejection recovery system 120 (220 in FIG. 6) is provided to avoid defective liquid ejection (including non-
15 ejection) and maintain the normal function of liquid ejection of the liquid ejection head 101. As shown in FIG. 2, the liquid ejection recovery system 120 is provided with a cap 121 (221 in FIG. 6) for capping the liquid ejection head 101 and a suction pump 122.
20 The inside of the cap 121 is linked to the liquid suction port of the suction pump 122 by way of a tube 123. On the other hand, the liquid delivery port of the suction pump 122 is linked by way of a tube 124 to a waste liquid tank 125 that contains a waste
25 liquid absorbent 126. The waste liquid tank 125 is provided at the top thereof with an atmosphere communication port 127. When the liquid ejection

apparatus is used for the first time for liquid
ejection (image recording) after ~~the shipment~~, the
liquid ejection head 101 is moved to the home
position where the liquid ejection recovery system
5 120 is arranged and capped by the cap 121 of the
liquid ejection recovery system 120 at that position.
Then, the suction pump 122 of the liquid ejection
recovery system 120 is operated to produce negative
pressure at the liquid ejection port and introduce
10 liquid from the liquid bag 103 into the liquid
ejection head 101 by way of the supply tube 111.

In the liquid ejection apparatus having the
~~above-described~~ above-described liquid flow paths, as
liquid is ejected from the liquid ejection head 101
15 and thus consumed from the liquid bag 103, the liquid
bag 103 in the liquid cartridge 102 gradually becomes
flat. Then, the detection plate rigidly secured to
the top surface of the liquid bag 103 moves downward
accordingly. The position of the detection plate 107
20 is detected by the volume-of-remaining-liquid
detecting means 112. Since the detection lever 113
of the volume-of-remaining-liquid detecting means 112
is urged counterclockwise by a spring, it turns
counterclockwise as the detection plate 107 gradually
25 ~~falls to follow the consumption of~~ as the liquid is
consumed and, when the detecting plate 107 gets to
the position indicated by broken lines in FIG. 2, the

upper end of the detection lever 113 interrupts the light beam of the photo interrupter 115, which ~~by~~ in turn generates a signal for notifying the user that the liquid in the liquid cartridge 102 is almost gone
5 and prompting him or her to replace it.

Generally, the internal pressure of the liquid ejection head 101 needs to be ~~held to~~ kept at a level slightly lower than the atmospheric pressure (or show negative pressure) in order to avoid any leakage of
10 liquid from the liquid ejection port of the liquid ejection head 101 and maintain the normal function of liquid ejection thereof. The pressure difference (negative pressure) is produced by the difference ~~of~~ in height, h , between the level of the liquid
15 ejection port of the liquid ejection head 101 and the level of the liquid bag 103. The internal pressure of the liquid ejection head 101 should be ~~held within a range kept~~ between 100.345 kPa and 101.131 kPa (between -20 and -100 ~~mmH₂O~~ mm H₂O in terms of
20 negative pressure), and fluctuations of the internal pressure ~~needs~~ need to be minimized. Therefore, the liquid bag 103 is required to be soft but not to be highly resilient. Additionally, the liquid bag 103 is required to operate as a gas barrier in order to
25 prevent changes in the liquid density due to evaporation, and also to be resistant against chemicals in order to avoid degradation of quality of

the liquid in the bag. FIG. 3 shows a liquid bag that can meet these requirements. The liquid bag 103 illustrated in FIG. 3 is prepared by laying two multilayer films, each obtained by laying a resin
5 film on an aluminum film, and welding the peripheral sections 103a through 103d thereof by heat. A rubber peg holder 106 holding a rubber peg 105 ~~in the inside~~ it is inserted at the middle of the peripheral section 103d and the lateral surface of the rubber
10 peg holder 106 is welded to the surrounding films by heat to produce a hermetically sealed structure. The use of the aluminum film provides the liquid bag 103 with flexibility and a ~~property~~ capability of operating as a gas barrier. Additionally, the use of
15 the resin film such as a polyethylene film provides the liquid bag 103 with resistance against chemicals.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

In the known liquid ejection apparatus having
20 ~~the above-described~~ above-described flow path structure and adapted to use a liquid bag of the ~~above-described~~ above-described type, the internal pressure (negative pressure) of the liquid ejection head changes as a function of the amount of liquid
25 contained in the liquid bag. When the bag is almost full of liquid, the expanded bag tends to be restored to its ~~the~~ original form so that the internal

pressure of the liquid ejection head comes close to the atmospheric pressure (to reduce the negative pressure). However, as the amount of liquid in the liquid bag is reduced, the internal pressure of the liquid ejection head falls (to increase the negative pressure).

FIG. 5 shows a graph obtained by observing the change in the internal pressure of the liquid ejection head when a liquid bag with internal dimensions of 80 mm × 150 mm was used and the amount of liquid in the bag was made to vary. In the graph of FIG. 5, the horizontal axis indicates the volume of liquid (cc) in the liquid bag and the vertical axis indicates the internal pressure (kPa) of the liquid ejection head (the vertical axis at the right side indicating the corresponding negative pressure (mmHg)). The pressure (negative pressure) changes remarkably when the volume of liquid is less than 20 cc but increases gradually when the volume of liquid exceeds 20 cc. However, the pressure increases rapidly once the volume of liquid exceeds 150 cc. Thus, a liquid bag of this type can feasibly be used when the volume of liquid contained therein is between 20 cc and 150 cc, with at which volumes the internal pressure (negative pressure) of the liquid ejection head changes little. ~~The feasible~~ Thus, the maximum feasible volume of liquid is 150 cc,

and 20 cc of liquid is left unconsumed. Then, the internal pressure of the liquid ejection head changes within a the range between of 100.443 kPa and to 101.031 kPa (within a the range between of -30 and to 5 -90 mmH₂O-mm H₂O in terms of negative pressure).

It is also known that the internal pressure (negative pressure) of the liquid ejection head 101 (201 in FIG. 6) changes as the carriage (210 in FIG. 6) reciprocates. To be more accurate, since the 10 liquid in the supply tube 111 (203 in FIG. 6) is driven to move within the tube 111 (203 in FIG. 6) by acceleration as the carriage (210 in FIG. 6) moves, the internal pressure (negative pressure) of the liquid ejection head 101 (201 in FIG. 6) changes. 15 Therefore, as the carriage is moved at a high rate of acceleration in order to accommodate the demand for high-speed-high-speed printing, the change in the internal pressure (negative pressure) increases.

However, the above arrangement of liquid flow 20 paths and the liquid cartridge of the prior art does not provide any substantial margin for the internal pressure (negative pressure) of the liquid ejection heads. This means that the demand for high-speed-high-speed printing can hardly be met with such an 25 arrangement.

Additionally, it is a serious problem from an economic point of view that 20 cc of liquid is left

unused out of 150 cc of liquid contained in a liquid bag. The volume of 20 cc constitutes more than 10% of the total amount of liquid contained in the bag. The unused 20 cc is normally thrown away ~~to~~ and
5 seriously affects the environment.

In view of the ~~above identified~~ above-
identified problems of the prior art, it is therefore the object of the present invention to provide a liquid ejection apparatus that can ~~raise~~ increase the
10 moving speed of its carriage by reducing the change in the internal pressure (negative pressure) of the liquid ejection head thereof as a function of the volume of liquid in the liquid bag containing liquid to be supplied to the liquid ejection head, and can
15 reduce the volume of liquid that is left unused.

According to the invention, the above object is achieved by providing a liquid ejection apparatus comprising a liquid bag for containing liquid to be supplied to a liquid ejection head and adapted to
20 generate negative pressure in the liquid ejection head by a ~~difference of water head~~ difference between the liquid ejection head and the liquid bag, the liquid bag being ~~so arranged as to make a~~ so that, of two sides of the liquid bag having the largest areas,
25 the side of the liquid bag facing in the direction opposite to the direction of gravity ~~out of two sides having a largest area to be~~ (i.e., the side facing

upward when the liquid bag is mounted in the liquid
ejection apparatus and the apparatus is operational)
is rigidly held at least partly and the other side,
which faces in the direction of gravity (i.e., the
5 side facing downward when the liquid bag is mounted
in the liquid ejection apparatus and the apparatus is
operational), to be is freely movable, the liquid bag
being provided with a means for detecting an amount
of liquid remaining in ~~said~~ the liquid bag by
10 reference to a position of the other side facing in
the direction of gravity, the detecting means being
~~and~~ adapted to move according to the amount of liquid
contained in the liquid bag.

Preferably, in a liquid ejection apparatus
15 according to the invention, ~~said~~ the liquid bag is
rigidly secured in an area comprising between 20% and
60% of the area that can be used for containing
liquid.

According to the invention, in a liquid
20 ejection apparatus comprising a liquid bag for
containing liquid to be supplied to a liquid ejection
head and adapted to generate negative pressure in the
liquid ejection head by a ~~difference of water head~~
difference between the liquid ejection head and the
25 liquid bag, the change in the internal pressure
(negative pressure) of the liquid ejection head as a
function of the change in the volume of liquid in the

liquid bag can be minimized so as to raise-increase
the moving speed of the carriage and reduce the
volume of the liquid that is left unused in the bag,
because the liquid bag is ~~so~~ arranged as to make a so
5 that, of two sides of the liquid bag having the
largest areas, the side of the liquid bag facing a-in
the direction opposite to the direction of gravity
~~out of two sides having a largest area to be is~~
rigidly held, at least partly, ~~and while~~ the other
10 side, which faces in the direction of gravity, is to-
~~be~~ freely movable.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

FIG. 1 is a schematic illustration of a liquid
15 flow path including a liquid ejection head, a liquid
cartridge and a liquid ejection recovery system that
is comprised in a liquid ejection apparatus according
to the invention.

FIG. 2 is a schematic illustration of a liquid
20 flow path including a liquid ejection head, a liquid
cartridge and a liquid ejection recovery system that
is comprised in a known liquid ejection apparatus.

FIG. 3 is a schematic perspective view of an
ordinary liquid bag used in a liquid ejection
25 apparatus.

FIG. 4 is a graph illustrating the change in
the internal pressure (negative pressure) of a liquid

ejection head that occurs when the volume of liquid contained in a corresponding liquid bag is made to change in a liquid ejection apparatus according to the invention.

5 FIG. 5 is a graph illustrating the change in the internal pressure (negative pressure) of a liquid ejection head that occurs when the volume of liquid contained in a corresponding liquid bag is made to change in a known liquid ejection apparatus.

10 FIG. 6 is a schematic perspective view of a common liquid ejection apparatus.

DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENT

Now, the invention will be described further by referring to the accompanying drawings that
15 ~~illustrates~~ illustrate a preferred embodiment of the invention.

FIG. 1 is a schematic illustration of a liquid flow path including a liquid ejection head, a liquid
20 cartridge and a liquid ejection recovery system that is comprised in a liquid ejection apparatus according to the invention.

Referring to FIG. 1, the liquid ejection head 1 is capped by the liquid ejection recovery system 20
25 at the home position thereof. The liquid ejection recovery system 20 is provided to avoid defective liquid ejection (including non-ejection) and maintain

the normal function of liquid ejection of the liquid
ejection head 1. It comprises a cap 21 for
hermetically sealing (capping) the liquid ejection
ports of the corresponding liquid ejection head 1 and
5 a suction pump 22, which is connected to the inside
of the cap 21 by way of a tube 23. The liquid
delivery port of the suction pump 22 is linked to a
waste liquid tank 25 by way of a tube 24. The waste
liquid tank 25 contains therein a waste liquid
10 absorbent 26 and is provided at the top thereof with
an atmosphere communication port 27. Thus, as the
suction pump 22 of the liquid ejection recovery
system 20 is driven to operate while the liquid
ejection ports of the liquid ejection head 1 ~~is~~ are
15 capped so as to apply negative pressure to the liquid
ejection port, foreign objects ~~there-in~~ in the liquid
ejection ports including thickened liquid, air
bubbles and dust are drawn out with liquid and then
driven into the waste liquid tank 26.

20 ~~Referring also~~ Still referring to FIG. 1, a
liquid cartridge 2 is also shown. It comprises a
liquid bag 3, a housing 4 for containing the liquid
bag 3, a rubber peg 5 for forming a supply port
through which liquid is drawn out from the liquid bag
25 3, a rubber peg holder 6 and a detection plate 7
rigidly secured to part of the lower surface of the
liquid bag 3 and adapted to detect the volume of

liquid remaining in the bag 3. The rubber peg holder 6 is made of resin and adapted to hold the rubber peg 5. It has an end that is bonded at the outer periphery thereof to the inner surface of the liquid bag 3 by welding. The rubber peg holder ~~holder 5~~ holder 6 also has a flange 8 rigidly secured to the housing 4. While the liquid bag 3 itself is similar to the ~~above described~~ above-described known liquid bag 103 (see FIGS. 2 and 3), it differs from the latter in that, of the two sides of the liquid bag having the largest areas, the side ~~of the liquid bag facing in the~~ direction opposite to the direction of gravity, or the upper outer surface, ~~out of the two sides having the largest area is~~ rigidly held, partly, to the upper inner surface of the housing 4 by means of an adhesive or bonding agent. If the bonded area is too small, ~~it the liquid bag 3~~ can come off from the upper inner surface of the housing 4. If, on the other hand, the bonded area is too large, the liquid bag 3 will be prevented from freely expanding. Therefore, the bonded area of the liquid bag is preferably between 20% and 60% of the area of the upper surface of the liquid bag that can be used for containing liquid. A detection plate 7 for detecting the ~~remaining~~ amount of liquid remaining in the liquid bag is rigidly secured to the lower surface of the liquid bag 3, which surface is freely movable as

~~a function of and moves as the amount of liquid~~
~~changes.~~ ~~The~~ Thus, the detection plate 7 moves
upward as the amount of liquid in the liquid bag
decreases.

5 A hollow needle 10 is arranged at the ~~cartridge-~~
~~containing cartridge-containing~~ section 9 belonging
to the apparatus main body and adapted to contain the
liquid cartridge 2. ~~and~~ The hollow needle 10
communicates ~~to~~ with the liquid ejection head 1 by
10 way of a supply tube 11 ~~so that~~ and, as the liquid
cartridge 2 is put into the ~~cartridge-containing-~~
~~cartridge-containing~~ section 9, the hollow needle 10
is driven to go through the rubber peg 5 of the
liquid cartridge 2. Then, liquid can be supplied
15 from the liquid bag 3 to the liquid ejection head 1.

 A volume-of-remaining-liquid detecting means 12
is provided in the ~~cartridge-containing cartridge-~~
~~containing~~ section 9 in order to detect the amount of
liquid in the liquid bag 3. The volume-of-remaining-
20 liquid detecting means 12 comprises a detection lever
13 arranged in the ~~cartridge-containing cartridge-~~
~~containing~~ section 9 and pivoted by a shaft 14, and a
photo interrupter 15. The detection lever 13 is
urged clockwise by a spring (not shown) and has an
25 end that is held in contact with a detection plate 7
rigidly secured to the lower surface of the liquid
bag 3. Thus, as the liquid in the liquid bag 3 is .

gradually consumed, thereby raising ~~to raise~~ the
detection plate 7 as indicated by broken lines in FIG.
1, the detection lever 13 turns clockwise. Then, the
other end of the detection lever 13 interrupts the
5 light beam of the photo interrupter 15 so that a
signal is generated to notify the user that the
liquid in the liquid cartridge 2 is almost gone and
to prompt him or her to replace it.

In the liquid ejection apparatus having the
10 ~~above-described~~ above-described liquid flow path, as
liquid is ejected from the liquid ejection head and
consumed, the liquid bag 3 in the liquid cartridge 2
gradually becomes flat. ~~Then, the~~ The detection
plate 7 rigidly secured to the lower surface of the
15 liquid bag 3 moves upward accordingly. The position
of the detection plate 7 is detected by the ~~volume-of~~
~~remaining-liquid~~ detecting means 12. Since the
detection lever 13 of the ~~volume-of-remaining-liquid~~
detecting means 12 is urged clockwise by a spring, it
20 turns clockwise as the detection plate 7 gradually
~~rises to follow~~ in conjunction with the consumption
of liquid and, when the detecting plate 7 gets to the
position indicated by broken lines in FIG. 1, the
lower end of the detection lever 13 interrupts the
25 light beam of the photo interrupter 15, which ~~by-in~~
turn generates a signal for notifying the user that
the liquid in the liquid cartridge 2 is almost gone

and prompting him or her to replace it.

Thus, in this embodiment, when the liquid bag 3 contains a relatively large amount of liquid, the force trying to restore the shape of the liquid bag that is expanded and the force trying to press down the lower side of the liquid bag by the weight of the liquid contained in the bag offset each other so that the change in the internal pressure (negative pressure) of the liquid ejection head 1 produced by the difference of in height, h , between the level of the liquid ejection port of the liquid ejection head 1 and the level of the liquid bag 3 is minimized.

FIG. 4 shows a graph obtained by observing the change in the internal pressure of the liquid ejection head of this embodiment when a liquid bag with internal dimensions of 80 mm x 150 mm as shown in FIG. 3 was used and the amount of liquid in the bag was made to vary. In the graph of FIG. 4, the horizontal axis indicates the volume of liquid (cc) in the liquid bag and the vertical axis indicates the internal pressure (kPa) of the liquid ejection head (the vertical axis at the right side indicating the corresponding negative pressure (mmHg or $\text{mm H}_2\text{O}$)). The pressure (negative pressure) changes remarkably when the volume of liquid is less than 8 cc but is generally constant when the volume of liquid exceeds about 8 cc. The pressure increases rapidly once the

volume of liquid exceeds 150 cc as in the case of the
~~above-described~~ above-described known apparatus.

Thus, with the above structure of the liquid
cartridge of this embodiment, the liquid bag can
5 feasibly be used when the volume of liquid contained
therein is between 8 cc and 150 cc ~~with-at~~ which
volumes the internal pressure (negative pressure) of
the liquid ejection head changes little. ~~The-Thus,~~
the feasible-maximum feasible volume of liquid is 150
10 cc, as in the case of the known apparatus, but only 8
cc of liquid is left unconsumed. Then, as seen from
FIG. 4, the internal pressure of the liquid ejection
head changes only within a ~~the~~ range between-of
100.639 kPa ~~and-to~~ 100.835 kPa (within a ~~the~~ range
15 ~~between-of~~ -50 and-to -70 mmH₂O-mm H₂O in terms of
negative pressure). While the pressure changes
within a range of about 0.588 kPa (about 60-~~mmH₂O~~ mm
H₂O) in the ~~above-described~~ above-described known
apparatus, in this embodiment it changes only within
20 a range of about 0.195 kPa (about 20-~~mmH₂O~~ mm H₂O),
~~or-a range that is one third as wide as that~~ of the
known apparatus, ~~in this embodiment~~. This means that
the reciprocating speed of the carriage can be ~~raised~~
increased accordingly to make the ~~embodiment-liquid~~
25 ejection apparatus adapted to ~~high-speed~~ high-speed
printing.

Additionally, the amount of liquid that is left

unused is reduced from 20 cc of the prior art to 8 cc,
~~to~~ a great advantage of the embodiment from the
viewpoint of both economy and the effect on the
environment.

5 While the liquid bag of this embodiment is
prepared by laying two films and bonding them along
the periphery thereof, the present invention is by no
means limited thereto and a bag of any other form may
alternatively be used for the purpose of the
10 invention. For example, a box-shaped bag formed by
producing creases on a film and bending it along the
creases may be used for the purpose of the invention.

 While the liquid cartridge is removably fitted
to the liquid ~~cartridge-containing~~ cartridge-
15 containing section in the ~~above-described~~ above-
described embodiment, the present invention is by no
means limited to the use of such a liquid cartridge.

 While the liquid bag is arranged horizontally
in the ~~above-described~~ above-described embodiment,
20 the posture of the bag is by no means limited thereto.
For example, it may be so arranged as to ~~take~~ have an
inclined posture for the purpose of the invention.
In short, it is only necessary ~~for~~ that the side of
the bag that is expanded by the weight of the liquid
25 in the bag ~~is~~ be made ~~to be~~ freely movable while the
opposite side is rigidly secured.

 As described above in detail, according to the

invention, there is provided a liquid ejection apparatus comprising a liquid bag for containing liquid to be supplied to a liquid ejection head and adapted to generate negative pressure in the liquid ejection head by a ~~difference of water head~~
5 difference between the liquid ejection head and the liquid bag, wherein the change in the internal pressure (negative pressure) of the liquid ejection head as a function of the change in the volume of
10 liquid in the liquid bag can be minimized to allow the moving speed of the carriage to ~~rise~~increase and to reduce the volume of the liquid that is left unused in the bag, because the liquid bag is ~~so~~ arranged so that, of the two sides of the liquid bag
15 having the largest areas, the ~~as to make a side of the liquid bag facing in~~ a direction opposite to the direction of gravity ~~out of two sides having a largest area to be~~ is rigidly held, at least partly, and the other side ~~to be~~ is freely movable.

ABSTRACT OF THE DISCLOSURE

A liquid ejection apparatus comprises a liquid bag for containing liquid to be supplied to a liquid ejection head and is adapted to generate negative pressure in the liquid ejection head by a ~~difference~~ of-water head difference between the liquid ejection head and the liquid bag. The liquid bag is ~~so-~~ arranged so that, of two sides of the liquid bag having the largest areas, as to make a the side of ~~the liquid bag facing in~~ a direction opposite to the direction of gravity ~~out of two sides having a largest area to be~~ is rigidly held at least partly and the other side ~~to be~~ is freely movable. The liquid bag is provided with a means for detecting an amount of liquid remaining in the liquid bag by reference to a position of the other side facing in the direction of gravity, and the detecting means is adapted to move according to the amount of liquid contained in the liquid bag.

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25